

ARPH conference 2013

The conference of the Association for Researchers in Psychology and Health 2013

After a hectic and busy end of the year 2012, a festive holiday season and a welcome Christmas vacation, the New Year got off to a very good start with the annual conference of the Association for Researchers in Psychology and Health (ARPH). This conference took place at the University of Twente, Enschede, located in the eastern part of The Netherlands on January 31st and February 1st 2013. The ARPH is a non-profit organization and collaboration between several Dutch and Belgian research institutes, which was founded in April 2011. The association aims at promoting and encouraging the scientific study of psychological approaches to both health and illness. By organising annual conferences and supporting and co-financing symposia organised by ARPH members, excellent opportunities are created for researchers to exchange knowledge, experiences, research ideas and expertise, in order to arrive at new insights and bring about the progress of this field.

With a total of 152 registered participants, this year's meeting substantially surpassed its predecessor (the first edition) in size, indicating the increasing reputation and popularity of the association. Furthermore, the content of the conference was impressive with a total of three keynote lectures, approximately 80 oral presentations and 25 poster presentations.

The keynote lectures reflected both the national and international character of the association with distinguished speakers from The Netherlands, Italy and the United States of America. At the beginning of the conference, Prof. Reinout Wiers (University of Amsterdam,

Amsterdam, The Netherlands) **Francine Schneider** was first to keep the audience captivated when providing his new and interesting perspectives on interventions focussed on implicit cognitions, substance use and health. Later that day, Prof. Fabrizio Benedetti (University of Turin Medical School and National Institute of Neuroscience, Turin, Italy) aired his impressive knowledge and expertise related to the placebo response. Finally, Prof. Kirk Warren Brown (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, USA) closed the conference with his lecture on mindful responses to stress, in which he combined evidence from both psychology and neuroscience.

CAPHRI, Maastricht University

The extensive number of oral presentations was divided among four main parallel sessions. Content of these sessions was either matched by theme, or consisted of symposia. The oral sessions were complemented with an extensive poster session. Together, this resulted in high quality sessions, covering a rich and varied area of topics like Internet-delivered interventions and eHealth, chronic illness and chronic pain, health behaviour and health behaviour change, patients and their social environment, positive aspects of health and child, adolescent and sexual health. The high quality of the presentations and posters was again visible during the closing ceremony, where the judges had a hard time assigning the awards for best presentation and poster. Bjorn Prins (Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium) received an award for his talk on how mindfulness reduces the

impact of catastrophic thinking on pain perception. Danielle Bartels (Academic Hospital St. Radboud, Nijmegen, The Netherlands) received an award for her poster on the role of expectations in placebo effects on itch.

Ironically, conferences also provide great opportunities to completely forget about research. Therefore, like every good conference, this conference provided excellent opportunities for networking and socializing. Networking slowly started during the coffee breaks and extended during lunch and dinner, whereas socializing increased during drinks and finally culminated at the surprise event, during which all researchers were transformed into excellent (and competitive) jugglers. To close this evening, all participants were invited to the

Faculty Club, where the party continued under the experienced guidance of the DJ; indicating once more that all (health) psychologists are amazing dancers!

In closing, I would like to thank the board of the ARPH and the organizing committee for realizing this year's conference. To put it briefly, it was a very well organized and intimate meeting, that touched upon relevant and interesting topics, incited new research ideas and offered good opportunities for networking and socializing. I'm already looking forward to third meeting, which will be organized by the University of Groningen (Groningen, The Netherlands). More details on this conference will be offered on the website in the near future: <http://www.arph.nl/>. ■